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OHG. *ruodar*, Lith. *irti*, OI. *rāme* fall into accord. Root-determinatives and suffixes become mere stranded relics of syllables in the fuller words that once were, and join together to become part and parcel of the ablaut material of the word entire. Thus *genē* 'produce' appears as *genā* in Skr. *janitvā*, as *genē* in Gr. *γένεσις*, as *gnē* in Skr. *jñātis*, as 'dehnstufe' in *jātās*; *onebh* 'mist' appears in Skr. *ambhas*, Gr. *ὄμβρος*, Skr. *nābhas*, Gr. *νέφος*, Skr. *abhrām*, Gr. *ἀφρός*; Skr. *āyūs*, Gr. *αἰών* threaten to unite with Lat. *jūs* by help of *aiewo-*, and even Gr. *φείγω* with *φέβομαι*, *φόβος* by means of *bheweg²*,—and so the sluice-ways of etymologies are thrown open.

Tentative as much of all this is in detail, taken as a whole,—and only so can it be judged,—it represents a path blazed in the jungle, and a path whose general course the later roadway of the science is bound to follow. BENJ. IDE WHEELER.

BERKELEY, CAL.

Select Poems of Shelley. Edited with Introduction and Notes by W. J. Alexander, Professor of English in University College, Toronto. Ginn & Company, Athenæum Press Series: Boston and London, 1898. Pp. xci, 387.

PROF. ALEXANDER has before this shown an unusual gift for unveiling to others the occult qualities of poetry, and in the present volume he has quite kept up with his promise. If the book is not a commercial success, it will be because there are so few who even wish to become acquainted with Shelley. The editing is in many respects a model of appreciative tactfulness.

The biographical introduction begins somewhat ominously with the remark that many passages in Shelley's life would incur the world's unhesitating censure, 'had he not been a man of genius' (!), but the essential facts are given after all with commendable distinctness, not merely of statement, but also of mental and moral attitude. The author does not altogether escape the gossipy tone, which indeed literary tradition has made inevitable in a Shelley biography; but his gossip is at least neither unwholesome nor impertinent: and the last fifteen pages, which give a concluding estimate of the poet's powers, are a real contribution to criticism. There is nothing of the kind in Shelley literature which so happily combines

the charm of sympathetic appreciation with the charm of clear thinking and concise statement. In such of the Notes as are purely literary in character (for the editor is not afraid of the 'sign-post' bugbear), the same virtues are shown. The whole book will prove suggestive and interesting to all old lovers of Shelley, and it ought to be effective in enlisting new recruits.

The editor will hardly, however, expect his readers to agree with him upon all points. It seems to me, indeed, that in a few matters of no little importance his criticisms have failed to reach the heart of his subject. For example, his notes on *The Sensitive Plant* begin as follows (p. 340): 'This is primarily a descriptive poem. The poet, with evident delight and exquisite power, produces his picture of the garden and its mistress, and enters into and sympathizes with the imagined life of the flowers.' On the contrary, I should say, this is primarily not a descriptive poem. It is sometimes mentioned as affording a brilliant refutation of the deductions of the *Laocöon*, but it seems clear that Shelley's purpose is not to give a 'picture of the garden,' in the ordinary sense, at all. If the reader tries to carry in his mind a 'picture' of all those confusing details, his imagination will be too much encumbered to catch the poem's true meaning. Shelley wants us not to see the flowers *en masse*, but to feel the spirit of beauty that pervades them all. The narcissi 'Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess, Till they die of their own dear loveliness'; 'the Naiad-like lily of the vale, Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale'; the rose that unveiled herself 'Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air The soul of her beauty and love lay bare':—all are but successive impersonations of 'the Spirit of Love felt everywhere.' Each image we can and should forget, for the time being, provided we receive and retain this impression from each of them, with a due sense of their cumulative charm. Shelley does not ask us to localize his flowers in a defined garden. The illusion is the more complete because it is not optical but spiritual.

The most marked characteristic, indeed, of Shelley's æsthetic faculty, is the supremacy of the spiritual element over the sensuous. Not, of course, that there is no room for sensuous imagery in his poetry; but while a beautiful substantial object meant much to him, a beautiful suggestion of the evanescent

ideal meant much more. The exquisite similes in the *Skylark*, for example, of the glow-worm and the rose, breathe as warm and caressing a love of the beautiful, for its own sake, as one is likely to stumble upon even in Keats. But it is not chiefly the glow-worm itself that is beautiful to Shelley's imagination, nor the 'dell of dew', nor the 'aerial hue'; it is the idea of the glow-worm spreading its mild influence around, but itself shrinking into timid seclusion. It is not the rose, nor its leaves, nor its scent, that charms one most, but the idea of the wooing of the winds and the diffused spirit of sweetness and love. Prof. Alexander of course recognizes Shelley's mythopœic tendency, and has indeed a very discriminating paragraph upon it, but I think he fails to make clear how large a part of the poet's genius this tendency controlled.

Prof. Alexander says (p. 302): 'The blank verse of *Alastor* is evidently affected by the study of Wordsworth (cf. *Tintern Abbey*, for example), and the influence of the elder poet is apparent also occasionally in individual phrases.' This is true enough, as far as it goes, but such passages as

Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses—

betray an indebtedness deeper than the mere cadence of the verse or the catch of an individual phrase. Indeed, during the years 1815 and 1816, Shelley was so far a Wordsworthian as even to infuse some of the new gospel into the third canto of *Childe Harold*. In his Introduction, p. lxxxviii, Prof. Alexander speaks of Wordsworth as 'seeing in [natural] phenomena the workings of one divine being'; and on p. 363 he speaks of Shelley's 'idea of the presence of one divine informing spirit in all nature, of which the soul of man is but a single manifestation' as being 'akin to, if different from' the doctrine of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* lines. With diffidence I must avow a suspicion that Prof. Alexander has prepared this volume without refreshing his memory as to the exact tenor of Wordsworth's natural religion; for otherwise he hardly would have expressed it in just this way, and surely could not have slighted so strangely the influence of the older poet upon the younger.

Perhaps the editor purposely avoids tracing 'influences', for undoubtedly the business is often overdone; but in the

case of such a poet as Wordsworth, whose acquaintance most students of Shelley will already have made, it is surely worth while. In the notes on *Epipsychidion* (p. 356), the influence of Dante is practically relegated to a foot-note reference; and here again, while the editor's policy is easily understood, I think he has made a mistake. His introduction to the poem is really excellent, so far as it goes, but it cannot be possible to get exactly Shelley's point of view without some knowledge of his great model in allegory. In this extraordinary fantasia Shelley has used a mediæval form for the expression of an idealized Renaissance passion, and if some elementary explanation of the process were provided, the student would be far better able to adjust his faculties to the poem's demands. So too, in Prof. Alexander's remarks on *Prometheus Unbound*, he neglects an excellent opportunity to illumine the subject by a striking comparative study. The drama was written shortly after the poet's summer with Byron in Switzerland, and it was during that summer that Byron was beginning to work out his idea of the same theme in *Manfred*. The way in which the two poets have simultaneously developed such utterly opposite ideas out of the same material, is one of the most curious facts in their joint history. But this suggestion is perhaps hypercritical, for the editor's introduction to the *Prometheus* is really very good.

Thus far I have mentioned only Prof. Alexander's literary notes. Upon what theory the notes in general are based, I do not understand. They are partly æsthetic, and partly explanatory and scholastic; but they are largely without system. It seems proper enough, in annotating the *Ode to the West Wind*, not to explain the words 'Mænad' and 'Baixæ'; but why then, when the same words occur a few pages farther on in *The Sensitive Plant*, should they receive a note apiece?

It would be a good thing if in books like Prof. Alexander's the two divisions of the commentary were kept distinct: that is to say, if notes which will help the student to a first appreciation of a poem were put by themselves, while those which ought to guide his subsequent study were left to follow after. For example, the reader who approaches *Alastor* for the first time will be much assisted by such comments as those on ll. 67, 129, 140, 479, etc.; they give him apt suggestions as to the main tenor of the symbolism: but as the book stands, he can

get at those suggestions only by struggling through miscellaneous material about the zodiac of Denderah, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the topography of the Hindu-Kush Mountains and the Aral Sea. These matters are all indirectly relevant, for all throw an interesting light on Shelley's method of composition ; but the genesis of *Alastor* is not the thing that a beginner should consider first.

In the explanatory notes I have marked but a few details that seem open to criticism. On pp. 306 and 307 the editor quotes four unsatisfactory explanations of the curious passage in *Alastor* :

On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulphs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream.

He is unable to approve of any of the four, or to suggest a fifth. Dowden's analysis of the passage is clearly correct, making 'its precipice obscuring the ravine' a parenthetical nominative absolute, and 'black gulphs and yawning caves' the object of 'which disclosed'. All difficulty is removed if one observes that the black gulphs, etc., were not at the top, as Dowden thinks, but at the bottom of the precipice. 'Disclosed above' means 'disclosed to one looking down from above.' The rocks are so high and steep that the bottom itself is hidden in shadow ; only a yawning blackness is visible from the top.

On p. 312 the lines in *The Euganean Hills*

Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Played at dice for Ezzelin,
Till Death cried, 'I win, I win !'

are merely said to be suggested by Milton's Sin and Death. Surely they are from *The Ancient Mariner*. In the original version of that poem, from which Shelley must have won his first familiarity with it, was the stanza

The naked hulk alongside came
And the Twain were playing dice ;
'The game is done ! I've won, I've won !'
Quoth she, and whistled thrice.

The 'she' here referred to is now known to be neither Sin nor Death, but 'the nightmare Life-in-Death'; but this addition was inserted only when the poem reappeared in *Sibylline Leaves*. As it stood in four successive editions of the *Lyrical Ballads*, her companion was an unnamed skeleton, while she was described as having a 'skin as white as leprosy', and being 'far liker Death than he.' Shelley's reminiscence of this passage was therefore not a surprising perversion.

On p. 347 we read that 'Arcturus was the name of the constellation of the Little Bear, or of a star in it.' Is there any authority for this? The name is sometimes applied to Boötes, or even (strange to say) to Ursa Major: but when did it designate a star in Ursa Minor?

On p. 349 (in the note on p. 204, l. 34) Prof. Alexander seems to scan the line

Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire

by reading 'empire' as a trisyllable (adopting the atrocious suggestion of Mr. Forman). 'Empire' is a disyllable,¹ accented on the ultimate: the pause in the verse takes the place of a light syllable, as so often in the old dramatists. The effect is to bring a tremendous ironical emphasis on the word 'these':

Scorn and despair,—*these* are mine empire.

For the accent of 'empire', cf. the other passage cited by Prof. Alexander, where it rhymes with 'fire'.

On p. 364 the 'obscure compeers', in the first stanza of *Adonais*, are called 'the other hours which are not made memorable by the death of Adonais'. Surely they are the future hours. I should explain the phrase by the lines which follow in the poem, not by the line preceding.

Prof. Alexander's selection of poems is excellent. Many lovers of Shelley will regret that he has left out the stanzas beginning 'Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon' and 'Far, far away, O ye Halcyons of memory'; and of course Shelley cannot be treated fairly without considering *The Cenci*: but individual preferences will not cause any quarrelling in this case, and of course the design of the volume (*virgin-*

¹ If we must have a trisyllable in the verse at all, it should of course be 'despair.'

ibus puerisque) necessarily excluded the tragedy. Perhaps it was the same consideration that dictated the omission of *Julian and Maddalo*.

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J. C. Poestion, *Isländische Dichter der Neuzeit in Charakteristiken und übersetzten Proben ihrer Dichtung*. Mit einer Übersicht des Geisteslebens auf Island seit der Reformation. Leipzig. Verlag von Georg Heinrich Meyer. 494 pages 8vo.

WHILE the old Icelandic literature has of late been studied with an ever increasing interest throughout most of the civilized world, Iceland of to-day and its literature are even to Germanic scholars to a large extent a terra incognita. Of course, everybody knows that some of the most proficient scholars of Germanic, particularly Old Norse-Icelandic, philology have been Icelanders, and that, as a whole, scientific studies have in different branches been carried on by Icelanders with splendid results. But modern Icelandic poetry has been so entirely overshadowed by the old literature, that hardly any attention has been paid to it by the world at large, and even rather scant interest in it evinced by the Icelanders themselves. It is not altogether an advantage for a people to have had a great past, be it in literature or in history. The great past, no doubt, is a shining example, but at the same time it acts to a certain extent as a damper on new energy and new talent. The old forms, the old ideas have such a strong hold on public taste, that there is hardly any chance for new development. And it is very hard for the new talent to be recognized at its real merit, because the old classical standard is always kept ready to reduce new claimants to fame ad absurdum.

The first record of Icelandic literature as a whole was given by Ph. Schweitzer in his 'Geschichte der Skandinavischen Literaturen,' but that work can by no means be compared with the thorough and exhaustive treatment of Icelandic literature in Poestion's book. This work is divided into three parts. In an introduction of 45 pages the author first familiarizes the readers with Icelandic conditions of life from the very first settlement of the island by Norwegians in the 9th century and down to our times. This part of the work, although very